

22. Fabrics and Clothes from Mesopotamia During the Achaemenid and Seleucid Periods: The Textual References

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The terminology of clothes in the Babylonian cuneiform documentation from the end of the Achaemenid period and during the Hellenistic times is marked by the use of words which were not frequently found in the Mesopotamian tradition.¹ This initial study based on private documentation, especially marriage **contracts, inventories**, and Babylonian temples' archives, has the objective of examining whether the traditional distinction between cultic garments and everyday life garments still existed at that time. On the other hand we must try to determine the linguistic references which were used for the designation **of clothes: correspondences** seem to exist between the Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic vocabulary for clothing with some designations used during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods. In fact, from the 4th century onwards, some 'new' clothes' names are probably to be considered as a visible presence in the cuneiform documentation of the languages really spoken at that time in Babylonia.

Since the late 4th century BC, Babylon was integrated into a new area of civilization, which has been established by Alexander the Great and his successors after their conquest of the Persian Empire. **One of the categories where new denominations may have appeared is clothing.** This fact may seem to be trivial or minor at first, but it actually appears to be particularly significant in terms of cultural identity. From that point of view, common people in Babylon had quickly noticed some differences between their traditional practices for clothing and those of the Greco-Macedonian newcomers:

- Anointing oil: "Year 149 SE, Antiochus (V) king, month Tašrîtu day x., the Greeks, as they are called, the *politai*, who in the past at the command of king Antiochus (the fourth) had entered Babylon, and who anoint with oil just like the *politai* who are in Seleucia, the royal city, on the Tigris and the King's Canal (...)"²

¹ I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Cecile Michel, Catherine Breniquet and Richard Firth, for their review of the manuscript, correction of the English text and many helpful suggestions. Errors and misinterpretations remain mine.

² BCHP 14:1-4 (http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-greeks/greeks_01.html).

- Iron armor: “Tebêtu. That month, day 15, the Hanaean troops, who did not fear the gods, who were clad in iron panoply, (...)”

Beyond cultural identity, the concept of fashion could also be taken into account. Currently, fashion is not really a subject of study in the assyriological field. The Old Assyrian and the Mari texts, however, have already shown that some names of garments, which refer to an ethnic designation may in some way attest an interest for exoticism which was transferred in the use of specific clothing.

Thus, iconography on clay and cylinder seals scenes dated to the Hellenistic period in Babylonia show representations of people with some typical ethnic clothing characteristics. Obviously, there is no question here that such drawings should be regarded as an accurate reflection of the clothes actually worn by the native Babylonians or Greek-immigrants: it is well-known that in the field of glyptic, for example, the iconography depends on specific conventions of representation and that such codes are far from being representative of the reality of everyday life.

Novelties, such as the nude hero, have little chance of being considered as a true reflection of people walking in the streets of Babylon. Conversely, the far more traditional designations of clothes worn in religious contexts, including the priest's costume, do not furnish a reliable picture of the reality of everyday life in the matter of clothing.

On the other hand, in the Babylonian marriage contracts from the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, especially in the composition of dowry gifts, we find mention of clothes and fabrics that have little to do with previously known designations. Does this mean that new clothes were really used, or does such an unusual vocabulary reflect mainly the predominance of a non-Akkadian language such as Aramaic? We know that Aramaic was increasingly used in Babylonia since the end of the 6th century as the main spoken language in opposition to the written Akkadian, which progressively became a language restricted to legal and historical writing, while Sumerian was still in use for scientific, literary and religious texts.

The written sources which can be used are however not very numerous, and what follows is more of a preliminary investigation than a full study provided with exhaustive data. We will therefore determine first if it is possible to speak about clothing in a religious context, and then clothing in secular context, in the time of the Seleucid Babylonia from the 3rd to the 1st century BC.

1. Clothing in religious context

The textile fibres attested are the same during the 3rd century BC as before: mainly wool, but also linen for luxury clothes and religious needs. If the Urukian rituals are a trustable source and are not too anachronistic, they show how the tradition was maintained, in broad terms, concerning the use of the same textiles for religious services. We must remember also that in the *Astronomical Diaries* that were written in Babylon during the 4th, 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, the price of wool was one of the main commodities which was accurately recorded every month in Babylon, together with the price of dates and barley.

1.1. Weavers and Prebendaries

We must first consider the documentation dealing with the temple's weavers, the wool rations, and

the allocations to prebendaries. These aspects are documented by the Esagil's archives, collected and studied by T. Boiy,³ which mention several artisans producing fabrics and making clothes. Following to the usual Mesopotamian terminology, these are referred to as *uṣ-bar* (Sumerian) and *išparu* (Akkadian).

We find some *lú-uṣ-bar* in Babylon who receive silver.⁴ They are: *Bēl-uṣuršu/Bēl-apla-iddin* (CT 49 128:10) and *Nabu-nadin-aḥḥē* (PSBA 19 139–140:18), who is referred to as an '*išpar kitē*'. The text CT 49 190 even mentions a "Council (*kiništu*) of the weavers".

In the second largest city of Hellenistic Babylonia, Uruk/Orchoi, the priests and prebendaries of Anu's temple received regular wool-rations. In P. Corò's recent book concerning the prebends in Uruk,⁵ we find that the goldsmith's prebend (*isiq kutimmi + bīt pirištūti*) includes some compensation in the form of garments and fabrics. The contracts from Uruk give provide data about goods retrieved by the prebendaries from offerings to the gods and cultic material. Together with food offerings and aromatics, they also received pieces of clothing (VS 15 37:4 and 22 *túg hu-ša-na-tu*)⁶ or raw wool (VS 15 37:4 and 23 *túg ṣu-u-[pat]-tu/ta*).⁷

1.2. Gifts offered to the temple

Garments for religious offerings may be put in the temple's offering box, called *quppu u pānāt quppi* 'the box and the space in front of it'. These garments probably considered to constitute a single set for the wardrobe of the divine statues, are called, in a traditional way, *muṣiptu*.

CT 49, 160 (28-i-155/219 = 92 BC)

Bēl-ab-uṣur (...) spoke to Bēl-tabtan-bullit (...) the *šatammu* of Esagil, to the Babylonians and the members of the Assembly of Esagil, saying: "The offerings deposited in the box and the space in front of the box of the daily offering of the temple – excepting gold and precious stone vases, excepting juniper and wine, excepting the contents of bowls for flour, libation bowls and *sassu*-containers, excepting donkeys, horses, and mules, excepting clothes (*túg mu-ṣip-tu*) and (*hé(?)*-*la-ti-i*), excepting garments of purple (*túg-síg-sag šá da-SI*), excepting contributions from the king and the queen, (that is to say) all what is prebendary's property [...]"

1.3. Fabrics for cult statues

During the Hellenistic Period in Babylonia, the ceremony of clothing (*lubuštu*) the divine statues was still practiced regularly, every month in the temples. This topic has been treated exhaustively by S. Zawadzki, and we may just refer, as a whole, to his book concerning the God's Garments.⁸

1.4. Fabrics for cultic furniture

Clothing of cult statues is not the only context in which fabrics were produced and used within the temple. Some other elements that can be considered as cultic furniture concern fabrics for daily use.

³ Boiy 2004.

⁴ Boiy 2004, 247.

⁵ Corò 2006, 333–359.

⁶ According to the *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 122b *Huṣānu* is a 'sash or a belt worn around hips'.

⁷ Taken as a variant for *šuppu*, which would indicate that it is a raw material, and not a part of the gods' wardrobe.

⁸ For the Seleucid period, see also Linssen 2004, about Seleucid rituals, 51 § II.3.3, which studied the monthly and annual *lubuštu*-ceremonies.

According to the *Rituels Accadiens*,⁹ in the Esagil, but probably also in other temples, the area where the divine statue was sitting was protected by a large linen curtain, the *gadalû*, (from the sumerian *gada-lá*); thus, in the morning, the chief-priest had to ‘awaken’ the god by opening the curtain:¹⁰

ana igi ^den ku₄ túg-gada-lá *ina igi* ^den u ^dgašan-ia *idekku*
He enters before Bēl, he removes the linen (curtain) before Bēl and Bēltiya

As part of their rations, the priests of the *bīt pirištūtu* receive some of the pieces of wool or linen which were used to cover cultic material. The context is here useful because it may, sometimes, be used for clarifying the meaning of the names of some garments. For example, what is registered in the CAD as Akkadian *šuppu* (with variants such as *šupattu*, *šuppātu* or *šuppītu*) with the meaning ‘a band of carded¹¹ (more probably: combed) wool’ and an etymological comparison with Aramaic, must be re-considered: in the practice, it seems more likely to be a piece of woollen cloth used to cover the sedan chair of the goddess Antu and the chairs on which the gods are sitting.¹² We may even ask whether the *šuppu* was not a kind of cushion or something similar. The same priests also receive a *hušānu*.¹³ According to the CAD, *hušānu* could be a leather belt or a cord, but, in such context, it could also be a woven strip or a ribbon that were occasionally wrapped around the waist. We may deduce from the same context that *hušānu* refers to a belt, as it is customary in the usual lists of clothes, but it also refers to something else: it seems to designate some kind of bands or strips, which the prebendaries can re-use, even if it is not always possible to determine in advance to what use such items will be put.

A special case is represented by the ritual of the *lilissu*¹⁴ where all the products and objects which are used for the rituals are listed, including a *túg suḫattu*¹⁵ and a *kutummu*.¹⁶

1.5. Clothing of the priests

Since the 3rd millennium BC, linen was used for the garments of the priests, and the Hellenistic era is particularly rich in data for linen. Although the rituals of the Seleucid period do include other garments in which the priests are dressed, we note that the vocabulary of the many well-known linen garments worn by the Babylonian priests of the 1st millennium remains the same as in preceding times.

In this sense, the more explicit textual documentation is provided by the ritual UVB 15, 40 edited by A. Falkenstein.¹⁷ In this ritual, we find the specification of the priest’s clothing, category by category. Thus, we may distinguish between the *šibtu*-tunics with or without fringes or sleeves (?), a *lubāru*-coat worn over, and possibly a coat shaped like a chasuble (?), the *hullānu*, completing the garment.

⁹ Thureau-Dangin 1921.

¹⁰ See also Linssen 2004, 80.

¹¹ CAD Š, 249b (*sic*). But as carding is not attested in ancient Mesopotamia, it is most probably combed wool. See *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 341a *šuppatu* II.

¹² See OECT 9, 40: *šuppētu ša* ^{giš}*tallu ša Antu* and OECT 9, 45: *šu]-up-pa-a-tú ša* ^{giš}*gu-za-meš*.

¹³ For example, VS 15, 37: *túg hu-sa-na-tu₄*.

¹⁴ Linssen 2004, 255.

¹⁵ Col. iv: 28: maybe a headdress?

¹⁶ A carpet?

¹⁷ Falkenstein 1956–57, 40 and pl. 34. See Zawadzki 2006, 91.

Obverse

(...)

the *mukkalu*-priest, the [.....]-priest]

6' [are covered] with a *lubāru*-coat (and) a *hullānu*-chasuble;
their head is covered with a *tapsû*-headdress;

the long-haired priests, the brewers, the bakers, the sacrificer, the millers,
the freemen (SU-bar-ra) and the servants are covered with a *šibtu*-tunic and they put two (interlaced)
mēzeḫu-strips over;

the consecrated lamentation-priest is covered with a linen *lubāru*-coat;
when he wears his *lubāru*-coat, it does not take part to the *lilissu*-drum;

the non-consecrated lamentation-priest is covered with a *šibtu*-tunic and he puts two (interlaced)
mēzeḫu-strips over the tunic;

the chief lamentation-priest is covered with a linen *lubāru*-coat and his head is surrounded by a
purple headband;
when he stands near the *lilissu*-drum, he must remove the *lubāru*-coat,
[when he], he is dressed in his (full ceremony[ceremonial])-garment;

[the] are covered with a *šibtu*-tunic [embroided with stars] and a rainbow;
they put [.....] on the left.

(...broken...)

(The-priest) puts on a linen garment and a *šibtu*-tunic without a fringe, and he ties a thin *ḫuṣānu*-strip around his body; over these (clothes of) white linen, he has a *lubāru*-garment, he ties a *nebēḫu*-band around himself; over the *lubāru*-garment, he has a garment [..... of] linen covered with red threads and he ties (another) *nebēḫu*-strip around: thus he is dressed in his dress (of ceremony).

Tunics and coats are girded with belts or bands interlaced on the chest: *ḫuṣānu*, *mēzeḫu*, *nēbeḫu* that have their own decoration and are well attested since the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian period. Finally, some priests wear a special headdress: a *tapsû*-cap for the exorcists and a purple headband for the Chief lamentation-priest.

Apparently, the main difference from the previous period, is that we find garments here worn by the priests, which were previously associated with the statues of the gods. As shown by S. Zawadzki,¹⁸ the *lubāru* which was previously a piece of clothing worn by the gods' statues, is later mentioned in the ritual text UVB 15, 40 in relation to priests. This is clearly an over-garment, heavily weighted with ornaments, and even this *lubāru* may be covered by an extra linen-garment.¹⁹

We can note, in the ritual text UVB 15, 40 the reference to some drawings of deities which were embroidered (?)²⁰ on the *hullānu*-chasubles of the priests:

¹⁸ Zawadzki 2006, 87–91.

¹⁹ See also BRM 4 6 // BM 134701 (Linssen 2004, 307–312), ll. 21': *a-di an-ge ú-nam-mar un-meš kur šu-bat sag-du-šú-nu šá-aḫ-tu ina lu-bar-ra-šú-nu sag-du-su-nu kat-mu* "until the Moon had completed the eclipse, people must have removed their headdresses and have their heads covered with their *lubāru*-garments". And in the same text, ll. 43'–44 *lú gala-meš túg gada mu₄ mu₄, ina lu-bar-šú-nu nu-uk-<ku>-su-tu sag-du-su-šú-nu kát-mu* "the lamentation-priests are clothed (*labšū*) with a linen garment; their heads are covered with their *lubāru*-coat in rags".

²⁰ See CAD Š₁, 490a *šapû* B.

(Here are) the names of seven images of the gods which are embroidered on the *hullânu* of the *ērib bīti*-priests: the two little Gemini: Ennun silimma and Maskim-silimma, then Udug-azida, Udug-Agabbu and Nin-ki-šarra (...)

Another text from Hellenistic Babylonia published by M. Jursa²¹ includes an extremely rare mention of the clothing of female religious personnel:

Letter of priests (*ērib bīti*), authorized persons and Nanaia-bulliṭiš the chief of the female singers to the scribes and to the headquarters of the Esagila's administration. We are waiting for the delivery of two linen garments and one *gammidatu*-garment for (Mrs.) Sagki-kuda.

1.6. The king's clothing, religious ceremonies

In the 'Nabonidus Chronicle', the costume which Cambyses (or Cyrus) would have worn at his coronation as king of Babylon in the spring of 538 in the E-nig-gidri-kalamma temple is mentioned. The passage is however broken and subject to divergent interpretations.²² This temple was also known as the temple of Nabu-ša-Harê. It was located at the northeast of Esagil, and reputed to be the place where the coronation of the kings of Babylon took place:

All of the people bared their heads. On the fourth day when Cambyses, son of C[yrus] went to the ... Egidrikalammasummu-official of Nabu, who ... [...]. When he came, because of the Elamite dress', Nabu the hand of [...] ... [...]

The king's clothing is also mentioned in some rituals, either by the verb *labāšu*, or with the generic word *tillu* 'clothing'. F. Wiggerman²³ considers it to be a kind of 'uniform', that is to say a standardized dress required for the king's religious duties. In any case, an accurate description is found in the ritual text UVB 15, 40 of the clothing worn by the king 'in order to take the hand of the gods':

- 8 clothing of the king in which he is dressed for taking the hand of the gods:
 a *naḥlaptu*-tunic of linen, a *patinnu*-belt, and a *lubāru*-garment embroidered with
 10' then, another *lubāru*-garment with a collar²⁴ and belt, a braid (or: a vertical strip) made of *šiḫtu*-
 wool, a braid (or: a vertical stripe) white,
 12' a braid (or: a vertical stripe) green, plus a jewel, called 'Ištar's charm'
 a Moon crescent, a cylinder-seal of jasper, a necklace and a bracelet (*samaru*) of gold

During some ceremonies, a royal attire is also mentioned, called a *túg-síg*, literally 'woollen garment', in Sumerian, in the *Rituel Accadiens*, edited by F. Thureau-Dangin (Thureau-Dangin 1921). F. Thureau-Dangin reads the word as being the Akkadian *sissiktu* but understands it as a coat, not as the usual *sissiktu*-fringe of the garment.

The concrete presence of a Seleucid king during the ritual (in this case, a building ritual) is unlikely in Uruk during the Hellenistic period. Actually, the king was represented by his *sissiktu*,

²¹ Jursa 2002, 108.

²² Grayson 1975, 104-111, Nabonidus Chronicle, col. III: 24-27.

²³ Wiggerman 1992, 53-54.

²⁴ The *gú* (= Akkadian *kišādu*) is a 'string', or an abbreviation for *gú-(è-a)* (= Akkadian *naḥlaptu*), if we consider this as a second set of clothing. The first option seems more likely, given the use of the same term which is clearly identifying a collar.

the royal coat, as was customary since the Neo-Assyrian period. We know that when Antiochos III visited Babylon in 188 BC, the priests of the Esagil brought to him the royal coat of Nebukadnezzar II.²⁵ But Antiochos was not only looking at the coat: it seems that he had been dressed in it, in order to participate to the New Year's Ceremony. The coat is thus qualified as "túg-síg-sag šá^{1d}pa-níg-du-uri₃ lugal šá ina é bu-še-e". According to Borger 2004,²⁶ síg-sag was the *argammanu* or purple. The túg-síg-sag would thus be a purple robe that was worn by the king in the rituals of the Esagil. So there remains some ambiguity or confusion in the texts of the later period concerning the designation of the royal purple coat between túg-síg/*sissiktu* 'coat or fringe of the garment' and síg-sag 'purple', probably with a metonymy.

1.7. Fabrics in religious context

We will consider here an especially interesting text from Uruk, NBCT 1244, edited by P.-A. Beaulieu (Beaulieu 1989, 69–74).²⁷ This is one of the very few administrative texts of the Urukian Bīt Rēš during the Seleucid period. It dates from year 59 of the Seleucid era and is an inventory of fabrics, especially linen, for clothing cult statues (Anu, Nanaia).

Some fabrics are used to cover cultic furniture, such as a *šubtu*-support, a *kigallu*-stand, an *agû*-tiara, a *tallu*-sedan chair, and a *kululu*-cap. Some of these fabrics may be reused as stripes (*sūnu*). Clothing and fabrics are stored in wicker baskets (*hallatu*). The most noticeable point is the distribution between the groups of garments and fabrics. We find thus:

- Standard linen fabrics (*gada-meš*)
- Fabrics called 'linen byssus' (*gada (gal) šá bu-ú-su*). The determinative 'gada' may indicate that the fabric was really made of linen. It would thus be an 'extra fine' linen. This is the interpretation of Oppenheim 1969.²⁸ But we can also follow P.-A. Beaulieu, and consider that this *bušu* is a 'sea silk', produced by the 'big pearl' (*Pinna nobilis*), a large bivalve shell from Phoenicia, and used to make luxury fabrics.
- Fabrics called 'linen *šaddinnu*' [*gada (gal) šad-din*], that P. A. Beaulieu suggests a connection with hebrew *sadin*. It is also known in Neo-Assyrian times as a 'gown', that is to say a cloth draped around the body, and not sewn.
- Fabrics called *ka-parassu* [*ka-pa-ar-as-(su)*], translated by P. A. Beaulieu as 'cotton muslin'/'

All of these fabrics are recorded and stored together under the designation 'large and small linen fabrics': there were 115 in use (ll. 1–9), and 91 stored in a wicker basket (ll. 10–13).

This demonstrates that during the reign of Antiochos I in Uruk, the temples had at their disposal different sets of very precious fabrics, imported in Babylonia for cultic purpose, like linen, fine linen, and cotton. With the exception of linen, none of them appears in fact to be a native product of Mesopotamia, and even the linen for religious usage seems to come mostly from Egypt during the 1st millennium.

Could the use of such rare fabrics be a consequence of Alexander's conquest? That would not seem likely. The establishment of the Seleucid Empire perpetuates the links, between Near and Middle East (including eastern Iran and modern Afghanistan) with the creation of a unified area of political power and of trade. But this was already the case under the Achaemenids. Thus, we are

²⁵ Del Monte 1997, 66–68.

²⁶ Borger 2004, 429 no. 816.

²⁷ Beaulieu 1989, 69–74.

²⁸ Oppenheim 1969, 248: "The finest linen imported is called *bušu*, byssus, and this terminology was also used in Mesopotamia and in Syria".

led to suggest the possible import of such luxury products during the 4th, even the 5th century BC in lower Mesopotamia. These were part of the internal trade of the Achaemenid empire: linen coming from Egypt, cotton from India, and the byssus from the Levantine coast.

2. Garments in a private context during the Hellenistic period

Unfortunately, the results for this category are far more mixed. We find very general and traditional designations, such as *túg-kur-ra*, *mušiptu*, or *gada*. And we find confirmation that Babylonia remains a major centre of production of woollen and linen fabrics and garments. For example, a text specifies: “the satrap of Akkad has sent silver, fabrics, goods, and tools (...) to the king.”²⁹

But our information comes mainly from dowry inventories (5 documents in total). There, we find records of garments which fall into two categories: those one with identified words; and the others with unknown or poorly-known words. They are presented here in alphabetical order.

2.1. First category³⁰

* *gammidatu*

A word that had been used for years in later Mesopotamia, since the Neo-Assyrian period; its form and specific use (an over-garment?) remain to be determined and it is recorded by dictionaries as a word of ‘Aramaic origin’.

* *gulēnu*

The same is true for the second word, (from Aramean *gelaimā* or *gelīma*), also attested during the Neo-Assyrian period. This textile is usually made of wool; according to the text Moore 1939 n°47:1, its manufacture requires a relatively long time (the planned rate of production is one *gulēnu* per year).

* *gunakku*:

This is a heavy coat made of wool that Aristophanes assigns to the Persian world.³¹ It was clearly a garment of great value with a specific decoration made of woollen curls. According to the CAD³² *gunakku* is connected to the Aramaic *gonakkā* and Greek *kaunakes*. From the context, it appears to be mostly a women’s garment.³³

* *kitinnû* (with fem. *kitinnîtu*)

The present discussion follows *ta* in the CAD where *kitinnû* is considered to be a derivative of *kitû* ‘1. linen (as material) 2. a linen towel (?)’. In the text Roth 1989 n°38:8, we find the term (síg) *kit-ni-tu*, which may be a variant of *kitinnîtu*. Thus, this would not be a simple fabric made of linen but a woollen garment (because of the sumerian determinative síg) already tailored. This garment is considered as *hiših̄tu* ‘valuable’. It is associated in the same text to a síg *ta-x x* and both together are valued at 25 shekels of silver, making them a costly clothing.

²⁹ Smith 1924 Pl 6:11: *lú muma’ir Akkad kaspu túg-mušiptu būšu u unātu (...) ana šarri ušebil*.

³⁰ * = not originally a Babylonian name.

³¹ *Sphakes* 1123–1172.

³² CAD G 134a.

³³ See BRM II 50: 8–10 and the marriage contract Roth no. 42:13.

kitû

Written gada-(há), is both the material (flax), the woven (fabric) and a 'linen cloth'. It is mentioned as such in the text presented in the previous workshop by S. Zawadzki.³⁴

mušiptu

Mušiptu is the most frequently used word to describe, as a whole, a set of varied clothing (wardrobe), or a 'suit', that is to say several pieces (underwear/inner robe/belt/ outer garment/headdress), or a single everyday garment. To such a set is assigned the word *rakistu* 'attached' in the same text published by S. Zawadzki. *Mušiptu* appears also there with the epithet *ša šumundu*, understood as a dissimilated form of *ša šumuttu* 'with a beet(root) colour'. In the marriage contract Roth 1989 no. 38: 10, *mušiptu* is pre-qualified with *síg* (wool). It is registered with another garment made of wool, and together they have a value of 10 shekels of silver. *Mušiptu* is also mentioned in Roth 1989 no. 40:10, where the suit is called *mušiptu rabîtu* ('long?') or *qallatu* ('short?') and has a value of 3 mana of silver. We find the same in Roth 1989 no. 42:18, where 13 clothes are summarized as *mušip-tu₄ a₄ 13-ta gal-tu₄ ù qal-la-tu₄*. In this text, the set consists of both wool- and linen-clothes.

našbatu

This is mentioned in the marriage contract Roth 1989 no. 38:11 and is known to have the meaning of 'outer-garment', with a value, there, of 4 shekels.

qirmu

This textile also appears in the marriage contract (Roth 1989 no. 42:13); it is a not very frequent term, but is attested from the Neo-Assyrian times where it was also part of a set of clothes given in a marriage contract.

šipirtu

The contract Roth 1989 no. 38:13 associates a *šipirtu* made of linen with a bed (^{giš}ná) *ia-a-nu-mi-i'-tu₄*. It is probably to be related to the *šipirtu* A of the CAD,³⁵ already associated with a canopy and a chair during the Neo-Assyrian period. It seems to be the designation of a kind of tapestry fabric, rather than a garment.

túg-kur-ra

Has the same general meaning as *mušiptu* and is a 'garment' in the sense of a complete suit of clothes. It is found in the text Roth 1989 no. 42:11. Interestingly, in the text Zawadzki 2010, 415, BM 76136: 1, it is qualified as *eššu* (new) and *iš-hi-eš-šu* (= ?).

túg-LAM-LAM

This is a rather a problematic formulation.³⁶ Its Akkadian equivalent remains unidentified but is certainly feminine. Maybe, it should be connected with the *túg-lum-lum*, which can be read *túg-guz-guz* (Akkadian *guzguzu*), which is a luxurious garment.³⁷

(túg) šir'am

It is mentioned in the marriage contract M. Roth 1989, no. 42:12 and is an Aramaic term well

³⁴ Zawadzki 2010, 415, BM 76136:2.

³⁵ CAD S, 201b 'a sash woven or treated in a special technique'.

³⁶ See Zawadzki 2010, 415, BM 76136:5' and 419.

³⁷ See Quillien 2013 and Payne 2013.

documented throughout cuneiform literature during the 1st millennium. It is an outer garment, made of wool or leather that may be worn for going outside and for travelling. It is thus worn also by shepherds and soldiers.

The permanent presence in such lists of clothes of very traditional designations, such as *mušiptu* or *túg-kur-ra*, that apply to all kind of garments, should be noted. The various kinds of clothes made of linen are subject to specific classification with the entry *gada*, which reflects the special status of this fibre in Mesopotamia.

The terms used for some specific garments fall mainly in the category of the clothes that are worn for going outside and for participating in ceremonies or festivals. The *gammidatu*, *gulênu*, *gunakku*, *qirmu*, *sari'am* / *šir'am* and *guzguzu* probably belong to this category. All of them are, generally speaking, valuable clothes. In particular, the strong presence of non-Akkadian names should be noted here.

At least two conclusions can be drawn from these data: first, the fact that linen occupies a small but significant share in the textile part of the dowry, indicating an expansion inside the civil society of a type of fabric that had been reserved during the Neo-babylonian Period for religious purposes or for luxury garments of the higher echelons of society. In fact, the question arises whether this development is contemporary with the one found in Greece, where the linen *chiton* gradually replaces that of wool.

The second conclusion is that words which are non-Akkadian but mostly Aramaic, are used for the designation of the most valuable clothes, whereas everyday garments continue to be identified by the same traditional Akkadian vocabulary. But no Greek word appears to be clearly attested, indicating that Greek garments were probably not used in a truly Babylonian context. The west Semitic or Persian (if *gunakku* is really a word of Iranian origin, as was supposed by Aristophanes) influences appear to have been more marked. But the existing documentation is mostly for women's clothing: men's wardrobe may have been more mixed.

2.2. Second category

amur(a)sakku

Zawadzki 2010, 415, BM 76136:6' made of linen; also in the marriage contract Roth 1989 n°42.

^{túg}*bar-<si>? sag-du*

Roth 1989 no. 42:12.

gadittu

Zawadzki 2010, 415, BM 76136:4': see *ibid.* 418.

kabtu? šá ši-in?-x-

unknown.

(túg)mah da-pa-<sa>-at

Roth 1989 no. 42:12. The word *túg-mah* has several Akkadian equivalences. It can be read *tunšu*, *šuturu* or *gadamaḥḥu*. It may also designate a coat as well as a blanket (if it comes from *dapastu*).

šamtu parittanu

a colored³⁸ šamtu. The designation  applies to wool.³⁹

(gada) ša muḥḥi **sag**

Roth 1989s no. 42:11 is a linen veil for covering the head.-See the following ša-rešētu.

ša-rešētu

Zawadzki 2010, 415, BM 76136:5, maybe a veil to put on the head, if not something like a pillow.

We must therefore establish a distinction between what may arise from an uncertainty in the readings (especially in the poorly preserved texts), what is likely to be understood after the emergence of parallels, and what is truly exceptional, such as the linen *amursakku*. We note that many of these terms like *paršigu* (ša) *qaqqadi*, *kitû ša muḥḥi qaqqadi*, or *ša-rešētu eššētu*, are related with some cloth put on the head designating a feminine turban made of wool or linen. Once again, no term seems to be related to Greek terminology.

The sample size remains small, since it is reduced to the dowry wardrobe, and seems, till now, especially to indicate a continuity of the oriental terminology. It gives the name of some clothes which are not marked by the presence of Greek and which remain attached to a kind of Middle-Eastern *koine* of the vocabulary of garments. Beyond the notion of fashion, we must take into account here the need to adapt the clothes to the climate of lower Mesopotamia. From this point of view, Greek wardrobe was not necessarily the most practical.

In conclusion, clothing in Mesopotamia does not seem to have become a vehicle of Hellenization: **that what was within** the religious domain continued to be part of a well-established tradition, even when incorporating the possibility of the use of new fibres such as cotton. With regard to the wardrobe of the individual, in practice, the preserved documentation concerns above all the female part of the population. In terms of the cuneiform texts of the Seleuco-Parthian period, clothes belong to the field of cultural identity. Identity remains independent of foreign influences, after the implementation of a vocabulary common to the whole of the Near East, and maybe the use of common forms of garments.

Abbreviations

BM	Tablets in the Collection of the British Museum, London.
BRM	Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan, Yale University.
CAD	The Assyrian dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, London.
NCBT	Tablets in the Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets, Yale University.
OECT	Oxford Edition of Cuneiform Texts, Oxford.
PSBA	Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, London.
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources.
UVB	Uruk Vorläufige Berichte über die in Uruk-Warka unternommenen Ausgrabungen, Berlin.
VS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin.

³⁸ See CAD *barittannu*: a colour used to describe horses, with an indo-european etymology.

³⁹ CAD Š1 339a: in TuM 2/3 2:28 the word is written *šamtu*.

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